

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL

May 2006



The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete.

FEDERAL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND

DEPENDENTS The 2006 edition of the popular publication *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* is now available on-line at

http://www.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.asp. The booklet, which will be available in print in a few weeks, updates the rates for certain federal payments and outlines a variety of programs and services provided by VA and other federal agencies. It also includes toll-free phone numbers, Internet addresses and a directory of VA facilities throughout the country.

Print copies can only be obtained from the U.S. Government Printing Office. The cost is \$5.00, which includes postage and handling. When they become available copies may be ordered on-line at bookstore.gpo.gov; or by calling 1-866-512-1800; or by mail to Superintendent of Documents, PO Box 371954, Pittsburgh PA 15250-7954.

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONIES AT NATIONAL

CEMETERIES IN FLORIDA These ceremonies are open to the public.

Barrancas National Cemetery (Pensacola Naval Air Station - the cemetery is located approximately eight miles southwest of downtown Pensacola. Travel West on 12th Avenue bearing right onto Fairfield Drive. When Fairfield divides, go left onto State Road 295 (following signs to Naval Air Station). Enter base in right lane, cemetery will be on the right.) - on Saturday, May 27, the Boy Scouts will place American flags on the gravesites. The Memorial Day Service begins at 9:00 AM (CDT) on May 29. The guest speaker will be Vice Admiral (Retired) Joan Engle. The Navy Choir will perform. For information call 850-453-4108.

Bay Pines National Cemetery (10,000 Bay Pines Blvd, St Petersburg - take Interstate 275 to Exit 25 (38th Avenue North) and go west on 38th Avenue North about five miles to Tyrone Boulevard. Turn right onto Tyrone Boulevard, which becomes Bay Pines Boulevard, and go approximately five miles. Go over bridge to the 1st traffic

road about ¼ mile and the cemetery will be on the left.) - The Memorial Day Service begins at 9:00 AM on May 29. The featured speaker will be Congressman C. W. "Bill" Young. Shuttle service will be provided from the parking lot to the cemetery. For information call the Bay Pines VA Medical Center Voluntary Service, which is in charge of the ceremony, at 727-398-9394.

Florida National Cemetery (6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell - take Interstate 75 to Exit 309 (Webster), which places you on county road 476B West. Cemetery is on the left about 1 mile.) - The Memorial Day Service begins at 10:00 AM on May 29. The ceremony is sponsored by the Florida National Cemetery Joint Veterans Committee. The Avenue of Flags, consisting of approximately 400 American flags, used to drape the caskets or cremation urns of veterans during committal services and donated to the cemetery by the next of kin of the deceased veterans, will be displayed along the cemetery roadways. The guest speaker will be Captain Alexander Harlemor. Captain Harlemor is the Detachment Commander, Company At, 642nd Aviation Intermediate Maintenance, Cecil Field, Jacksonville, FL, as well as Logistics Management Officer, Army Aviation Support Facility, Brooksville FL. Captain Harlemor is a decorated pilot having served on active duty during September 2004 through October 2005.

Guests are invited to arrive early and enjoy the patriotic and inspirational musical prelude, which will begin approximately 15 minutes prior to the ceremony. The South Sumter High School Band members and Linda Burnette, soloist, will be performing. VFW members Garfield Jones and Gayle Williams will perform "Taps." Ye Mystic Aircrew will conduct the flyover and the Florida National Guard will provide the gun salute.

The cemetery's Public Information Center will be open from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM to assist visitors with inquiries. Seating is limited; those attending are encouraged to arrive early, wear comfortable clothing and bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on. Wheelchair and scooter parking is available at Shelter B. Parking attendants will be directing traffic. For information, call 352-793-7740.

St. Augustine National Cemetery (104 Marine St, St. Augustine - adjacent to Florida National Guard Headquarters. From U.S. Route 1, turn east on King Street. Travel one mile to Aemenida Menendes. Then turn right (four blocks) on Menendes to enter Marine Street. Cemetery is in the first block.) - The Memorial Day Service begins at 10:00 AM on May 29. The ceremony is sponsored by the Military Officers Association of America, the Florida National Guard, and the St. Johns County Veteran Service Office. The Master of Ceremonies will be Col. Henri F Erkelens, U.S. Army (Retired). Honor guards from veterans service organizations and the Ancient City Pipes and Drums will participate. The names of veterans from St. Johns County who have passed away since Veterans Day 2005 will be read. For information call the Florida National Guard Public Affairs Office at 904-823-0166.

ZEPHYRHILLS VA CLINIC REOPENS The Zephyrhills VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic is now open at its new location: 6937 Medical View Lane, Zephyrhills (33542). The telephone number is 813-780-2550.

Services available are primary medical care; nursing clinics for hypertension; diabetes education/monitoring; various treatments - injection, dressings, etc.; phlebotomy for collection of blood specimens; basic radiology services; and Coumadin management.

Registration and Enrollment Information: Pre-registration at this clinic is required. Patients not previously registered may do so at this clinic and will be given an appointment for a later date.

VA AWARDS GRANT TO FLORIDA VETERANS HOME (VA News Release April 6, 2006) WASHINGTON – Making sure the Florida State Veterans Home in Daytona Beach remains a comfortable residence for veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a grant of about \$650,000 to renovate the Emory L. Bennett State Veterans Home. The grant will pay up to 65 percent of the cost for renovations at the state facility. The overall cost of the project is about \$1 million.

In fiscal year 2005, VA spent over \$5.2 billion in Florida to serve nearly 1.8 million veterans who live in the state. VA operates six medical centers in Florida, along with more than 40 outpatient clinics and 10 Vet Centers. Information about Florida's six veterans homes can be found on the Web at <http://www.floridavets.org/nursing/nursing.asp> or by calling (850) 487-1533.

IMPORTANT DATES IN MAY

May 1 payments for April due

May 8 last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 06-01-2006 payments

May 22 last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 06-01-2006 payments

May 29 Federal holiday - Memorial Day

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 **1-800-827-1000**

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 **1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)**

Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications **1-877-823-2378**

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - **1-877-222-8387**

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) **1-877-838-2778**

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 **1-800-669-8477**

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -

CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023

CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024

Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 **1-800-733-8387**

Foreign Medical Program Office (medical treatment abroad) - PO Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-5021 **303-331-7590**

National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL **727-398-9426**

6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 **352-793-7740**

Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL **850-453-4108/4846**

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC 20420 **1-800-697-6947**

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 **1-888-244-6711**

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit - Chicago VA Regional Office **1-800-829-4833**

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: **www.va.gov**

VA Forms: **www.va.gov/vaforms**

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) **www.warms.vba.va.gov**

Property Management (sale of VA-reposessed homes): **www.ocwen.com**

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: **www.floridavets.org**

St. Pete Regional Office: **www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete**